More than a geeky princess: Entrapta, Autistic Representation, Dataist Thinking, and *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*

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Table of Contents

Introduction…page 2

Chapter 1: Autistic Entrapta, the perils of dataist thinking, and fan fictions…pages 3-18

Chapter 2: "We wrote her that way": Entrapta and autistic representation in She-Ra…pages 19-24

Chapter 3: Entrapta, She-Ra, and Autistic Representation…pages 25-28

Concluding Words…page 29

Introduction

This e-book consists of three chapters, entitled "Autistic Entrapta, the perils of dataist thinking, and fan fictions" (Chapter 1), "'We wrote her that way': Entrapta and autistic representation in She-Ra" (Chapter 2), and "Entrapta, She-Ra, and Autistic Representation" (Chapter 3), along with concluding words I wrote in August 2023.

I originally wrote these in three pieces in November 2019, May 2020, and August 2020. The latter was originally printed on June 10, 2020 on *Neuroclastic.* I would probably write these pieces different today, as I have watched many other series since then, but I do think these pieces have value, as the number of autistic characters in media continues to grow, even though those depictions are not always positive. I also mentioned Entrapta briefly in a post about Steven Universe and his vegetarianism, as revealed in *Steven Universe Future*, and recently posted PDF version of that article.

With posts by people who are hostile to Entrapta as positive autistic representation out there, there are luckily other positive posts on CBR, Bustle, and elsewhere, with defense of her even on Tumblr here here and here, to give two examples. The point is that Entrapta remains important as a fictional character and it is only right to put these posts into one e-book.

If I add together the word count for all these chapters, it comes to over 9,000 words, meaning it doesn't fall into the category of novel, as delineated by the Nebula Awards of the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America. However, the e-book could be considered equivalent to what they define as a novelette ("at least 7,500 words but less than 17,500 words"), although this is non-fiction commentary rather than fiction.

Happy Reading!

- Burkely

Chapter One: Autistic Entrapta, the perils of dataist thinking, and fan fictions

A screenshot from Entrapta's debut in "System Failure," in season one of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power,* the first time we see her in that episode.

Recently, I read a thought-provoking article by Bohyun Kim in *Information Today*, which I mentioned in my recent newsletter, where she talked about "data-ism." She defined this term as data replacing our thinking to validate or invalidate a hypothesis, with data and algorithms seen as "a superior means to process data" and find meaning in it, as compared to human thoughts. She added that such a concept is enabled not by a particular technology but by a "specific group of people who will benefit from implementing data-ism society-wide at the cost of others outside that group" like those behind Facebook and Google. This brings me to *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* where one character embodies this ideal above anyone else: Entrapta. You could say she is a dataist, pure and simple. However, she may not fully fall into this category as she has her own thoughts and experiences, like when she tries to stop the portal from opening or her decision to join Bow, Adora, and the other heroes. Admittedly, she is one of my favorite characters, correctly described as autistic by the show's existing fandom, even having a tag on

Archive of Our Own: "Autistic Entrapta."[1] After all, she is autistic as noted on a leaked character sheet for the show itself. This is part of the reason she was included in fan fictions of a person I know, as noted later within this post.

I must warn you, for those who haven't finished Season 4 of *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power,* that there are some spoilers, not only for that season but for the whole show. Long story short, Entrapta is a princess with prehensile hair who is a scientist and inventor always trying to tinker with ancient technology. A number of her experiments go terribly wrong, like the creation of murderous robots in "System Failure" (her debut in the series). She is originally portrayed as deep into her work and about experimenting with ancient technology ("First Ones tech"). In a later episode, she is unintentionally stranded in the Fright Zone, in "No Princess Left Behind", the aftermath of the kidnapping in "Princess Prom." This is where the villains, known as the Horde, have their home base. She later joins them in "The Beacon."

This episode is why some, like Ana Mardoll, say there are "problems" with Entrapta. She argued, back in December 2018, that it is hurtful that the one neurodiverse (ND) team mate turned evil because she is supposedly "too much of a reckless fool to realize that evil is bad." They further state that she is, in their view, a "collection of parodies and stereotypes about ND people being foolish and easily confused and laughably simple to lie to." She also argues that Entrapta's so-called "fall to evil" frustrates them because the show gives Catra complex reasons for why she stayed with the Horde and claims that Entrapta plays off ableist assumptions about ND people. While I can understand this perspective, it is clearly misguided. She is a character who is undoubtedly autistic, but also sweet and an "underappreciated technowizard." The latter is key. Even though she joins the Rebellion, serving as part of the Princess Alliance, after "System Failure," this is short-lived. Remember how Glimmer reacts to her in that debut episode: very negatively, often grumbling and sighing, only wanting Entrapta to join them to impress her mom and get the Rebellion "cool junk" to defeat the Horde. The fact that she and Adora both make fun of Bow for his pretty cool "trick arrows" says something about how they feel about Entrapta.

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[1] The Wikipedia page describes her as "the Evil Horde's chief technician...a skilled inventor...credited with designing advanced equipment for The Horde...[and has a] scientific and fact-based nature, and quickly warmed up to Catra and Hordak, with whom she forms an emotional relationship." Other fans have speculated she was written with Aspergers Syndrome in mind or think it is highly evident without a doubt (see here, here, here, and here for example), even noted on TV Tropes.

What Glimmer declares, along with acting occasionally aggressive toward her does not bode well. The only person who sympathizes with her is Bow, saying:

> *She's a brilliant inventor. She makes robots and rehabs old tech left by the First Ones. She's a pretty big deal in the Etherian Makers Community...I bet Entrapta will like my arrows...Entrapta has traps set up all over her castle. They're supposed to be really cool...Big fan of your work, princess. Maybe not this, but your other work.*

He says the last two lines after he bows to her. She gladly accepts his praise, chuckling and saying "hi," and he then kisses some of her prehensile hair courteously after she extends it to shake hands with him. The screenshot from that episode, showing her reaction is below:

She is friendly and nice to Glimmer and Adora throughout the episode, even wanting a "date" with Glimmer to discuss how teleportation works. She even offers to give up her leg to save them from the murderous robots. As such, I'm not sure how people can call her "un-sympathetic." After all, all of them, plus the kitchen staff, work together to take down the virus from the infected First Ones disk, with Bow and Entrapta working together. Not surprisingly, she, of course, puts the disk together again at the end of the episode.

Her only other appearances, before she joins the Horde in "The Beacon" are "Princess Prom" and "No Princess Left Behind." In the first of these episodes, Entrapta comes to the prom,

happily greeting Adora and Glimmer, asking if they are there for the "social experiment" where, as she describes it,

> *Different groups are forced to mingle. Hierarchies form and break. It's the perfect place to observe behavior. And they have tiny food.*

She pries a bit into Glimmer's emotional uneasiness in the episode, making her annoyed with Entrapta, while Mermista doesn't want to involve herself in that or in Entrapta's observations. With all this excitement, Entrapta calls it "the best social experiment ever." After all, she is a person who "loves science and refer[s]...to parties as "social experiments" while standing off to one side," having trouble making friends. Later, in the evening, Adora remains protective of her, with Catra helping her get a better vantage point. It is then that Entrapta and Catra become a bit friendly. She calls Catra her new "assistant...[who] brought snacks," with Catra saying she stole her food, and asked Catra to spy on the crowd with her. She teases Adora with the idea this is "love," who pulls Entrapta aside, reminding her of the allegiances she has agreed to:

> *Entrapta, she's from the Horde. The people the Rebellion are fighting? The Rebellion you're a part of.*

Some say that she feels a bit oblivious, but perhaps her heart isn't into the Rebellion. After all, who, other than Bow, has treated her with respect? Even Adora is forceful with her. Add to this what happens in "No Princess Left Behind": Entrapta goes with Sea Hawk, Mermista, Perfuma, and Frosta to rescue Glimmer and Bow. She becomes enamored and enchanted with Horde technology, even re-programming a Horde bot she names "Emily," later shown in the episode, "Promise." Even the patience of Perfuma is tested by Entrapta, while Mermista is a bit annoyed as well. Still, they all feel awful when they think Entrapta is killed in a blast during their escape. That brings us to "The Beacon." Mardoll is saying that Entrapta is a "reckless fool" for not realizing that the Horde is "bad" and that she is taken in by Catra's lies. But is this actually the case? Catra already had a rapport with Entrapta after Princess Prom, so they already know each other to an extent. Even Scorpia knew who she was. As she told them, their cuffs weren't holding her. She stayed there as her choice. On the one hand you could say that Catra tapped into Entrapta's insecurities. On the other, no one, apart from Bow, treated her with respect when she was part of the Princess Alliance. They all tried to use her. Of course, the

Horde also wanted to use her too, but I doubt she is naive to such an extent that she does not recognize what the Horde is doing to the planet.

Rather, as Beth Elderkin pointed out, it isn't clear whether she even knows she defected, or if she even cares what side she is on. This is clear in the "Ties That Bind" when she tentatively says she is on the side of the Horde, only after Glimmer asks her "Entrapta, are you on the Horde's side?". Here's her full response to that question:

> *I'm on the side of science. But I am living at the Fright Zone now and the Horde is supplying me with tools and materials for my work. So, yes, I guess?*

Rather, she only cares about the pursuit of knowledge, with people around her "only worth the data they [can] provide." As a result, she is often undergoing dangerous experiments, taking notes, and "making hypotheses based on the results." This means she is person with clear "moral ambiguity" but seems to not even care about what the Horde is doing to the planet. Catra, to quote again from Elderkin, serves as a "listening ear" to Entrapta, showing her new technology and giving her free reign. This allows her to hack the planet, with her restraints gone, beginning in "Light Hope," while ignoring the signs that Catra plans to use her technology to hurt millions, possibly because she doesn't care. The same could be said for the fact that her experiment almost destroys the world but is reversed thanks to the combined power of the princesses in the Season 1 finale, "The Battle of Bright Moon."

Mardoll also quotes from Abigail Nussbaum, who writes another criticism in "The Problem of Entrapta", claiming that Entrapta is "the embodiment of the idea that you can't trust mentally ill and ND people with guns or power or being president or whatever," or that it is "impossible to "redeem" Entrapta with a reveal." Rather, she argues that Entrapta "has to face her actions and atone," while further claiming she is "being written in a way which seems to suggest that autistic folks lack that capability to self assess." She even claims that "the overall collection of her personality traits has a high correlation to us [ND people], so the portrayal of her fall to villainy needed to be handled with care--and it wasn't." She further declares that Entrapta "was turned through a combination of being profoundly foolish and utterly lacking any empathy: two harmful stereotypes about ND folks." This is an incorrect reading of her character. To bring in Elderkin again, clearly Entrapta is naive, but she is also adorable, and is "so disconnected from the world's problems that she doesn't even know she's a villain," making her a true "morally grey character." To say she is foolish is silly. She could have left the Fright Zone at ANY TIME.

But she did not. Why? She has a "cheerfully wobbly moral compass" and more importantly an "Oppenheimer-like joy of discovery" above any ethical choices. This is a reality that neither Mardoll nor Nussbaum can recognize. Surely, she doesn't fully recognize that her experiments are "not just hypothetical ideas, but real things that affect real people" to quote from Elderkin. But that doesn't make her a bad person.

What about those that say she "often exemplifies the clinically un-empathetic autistic stereotype"? This belief tied with the claim that she is "evil by lack of “theory of mind”" is incorrect. While I agree that it would be great if she could "grapple more with morality, manipulation, and pursuing obsession" and have more of "her emotional and compassionate empathy...revealed to the audience," she does express emotions in relation to Emily, a robot she had modded out of a Horde robot, to help her with her work, just like those robots she modded out as war machines in "The Frozen Forest." Without a doubt, she is blindly dedicated to research, no matter the cost, and undoubtedly has social anxiety. Even so, she finds humanity in the villainous Hordak, working with him to build an inter-dimensional portal, starting in "Signals." After seeing him break down with weakness, she creates an armored suit for him, allowing them to become friends, beginning in "Huntara." This suit is later damaged by Catra in the most recent season as a way of manipulating him to do what she wants.

It is evident that Entrapta believes that her data and calculations will give her the method to discover the "answers," no matter the cost. Take what she said in "White Out" as an example of this mentality:

Entrapta's observation, in response to Catra telling them they need to leave, is correct.

With that all being said, I would not say she is "un-empathetic" or that she does not have agency. She willingly stays with the Horde, a decision that the princesses respect in "Ties that Bind" and "The Signal," although they disagree with it. That's at least how I've always seen it. She even sticks up for Catra and is able to convince Hordak she is valuable, which leads him to send her to the Crimson Waste to get a specific artifact in "The Price of Power." You could claim she doesn't listen to Adora trying to talk sense to her, telling her to not use the Sword of Protection to open the portal in "Moment of Truth," but she does actually take into account what Adora is telling her. And after doing some tests, she realizes that Adora is right! Sure, she trusts the data, but she uses it with her own thoughts and analysis, making it a bit different from her typical dataist thinking. In same episode, she has a revelation that shows this to be the case: the anomalies of the portal will be "catastrophic," unhinging time and space, "creating a warped reality that would collapse in on itself, erasing us from existence." She tries to warn Catra about this, saying she must tell Hordak, but she angrily zaps her with a stun gun, ordering Scopria to send her to Beast Island, which she reluctantly complies with. Catra then lies to Hordak, claiming Entrapta was on the side of the princesses all along, and he does not discover this lie until the end of Season 4. As this season comes to a close, Catra opens the portal and almost destroys the whole world, as recounted in "Remember" and "The Portal," with Adora barely saving the day. Apart from Angella's sacrifice, the latter is partly thanks to the help of Entrapta in

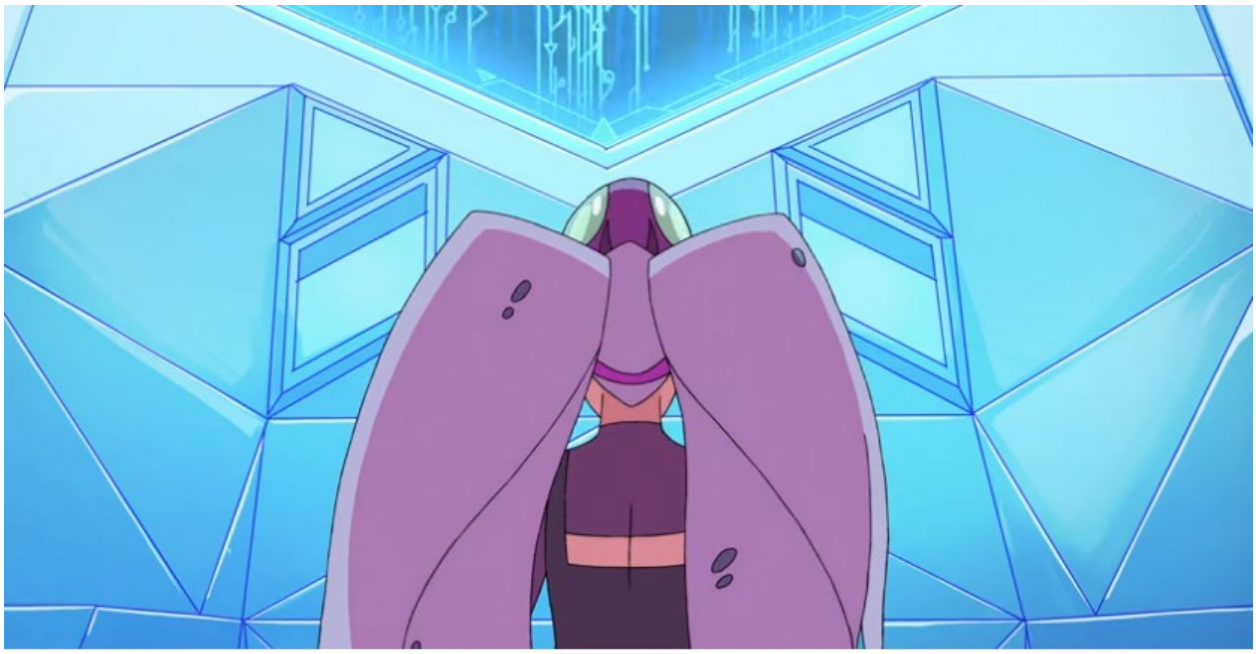
the bizarre alt-Etheria world, who helps them, to an extent, fix reality in the best way she can. At the same time, she has compassion, saying to Adora at one point: "it was nice being friends with you" as she fades away from existence, at least in this bizarre world.

For much of Season 4, she doesn't make an appearance, with Scorpia concerned about her, as shown in "The Coronation," while Catra angrily wants her recordings, noted in "Princess Scorpia." Almost, as a sort of payback, Entrapta, along with Adora, is one of those people who haunts Catra in her dreams in "Flutterina." In a later episode, "Beast Island," Adora describes Entrapta as having "purple hair and really likes robots. Like, really, really likes robots," and they discover she is still alive. She is said to be heading for the center of the island, and when it seems all hope is lost, she literally saves them (Bow, Swift Wind, Micah, and Adora/She-Ra). So much for saying she doesn't have compassion. Here's what she says after she rescues them, with a smile on her face:

"Princesses, I saved you!"

In the following episode, "Destiny Part 1," her life on the island is explored a bit more. Clearly, she is overjoyed that the island is full of "technological monstrosities," calling it "paradise," glad to help them learn about the heart of Etheria. She brings them to an ancient temple, calling it "amazing," saying the answers she is looking for are there, pulling up a

directory of various files. She reveals to them that all the princesses are part of the Heart of Etheria project, with She-Ra as the key, channeling the weapon, with the First Ones using the sword to control and use her. Adora learns she doesn't get to refuse this task, to her horror, and Entrapta wants to stay on the island, no matter what:



"This place, its pure information. Everything I've ever dreamed of knowing about the planet, its all here, so I'm staying...I just wasn't suited for friendship...I belong here."

Bow and Adora pull her away from this, although she struggles thoroughly and claims that no one understands her, which is partially true, based on her experience with the Princesses and the Horde. As it seems she will be engulfed by the vines, Bow talks to her about friendship and then, Adora, as She-Ra mentions they came on a ship with ancient technology. This pulls her out of her funk, although she admits that Bow's talk didn't affect her. Despite this, she is glad that her and Bow are friends. This means that Entrapta goes with them back to Bright Moon because of data and scientific discovery, not because of friendship or anything else. In many ways, her character subverts the Entrapta from the original She-Ra series whom is a "villainous technician...a skilled inventor, and is credited with designing advanced equipment for The Horde...[and] her speciality is devising different traps for members of The Rebellion." She also can "design and create complex machines and inventions to be used by The Horde....mentally control her long hair at will...[using it[...to capture enemies or to control her various machines."

In some ways, her character reminds me of Peridot in Steven Universe, even more than Spinel (who also struggles with friendship), as there are a lot of parallels. For one, both characters have, at first, a love or attachment to their robots, rather than people or other beings. Entrapta has her robotic servants, and later Emily, while Peri has her robonoids, which Steven says are "like her babies" in her debut in "Warp Tour," and adeptly uses technology as shown in "Marble Madness." Later she works with Jasper, treating Lapis as an informant (and prisoner) as noted in "The Return" and "Jail Break." However, her plans revealed in "Keeping Together," and she is injured by the Crystal Gems in "Friend Ship," is poofed by them in "Catch and Release." Due to a friendship with Steven, she grows in the coming episodes, becoming more acquainted with Earth culture, helps them build a drill to the center of the Earth, and begins to respect other beings more ("When It Rains", "Back to the Barn", "Too Far", "Steven's Birthday" (non-speaking), "It Could've Been Great", "Message Received", and "Log Date 7 15 2", "Super Watermelon Island", "Gem Drill", and "Same Old World").

She thinks about the Gem plans for Earth just like Entrapta does about her inventions, as shown in "It Could've Been Great" and "Message Received," but these types of thoughts change. She learns how to be better with people, strikes up a relationship with a water gem, Lapis Lazuli, another one of my favorite characters, apart from Peri. Both are skeptical of each other in "Barn Mates" but later get more acquainted after "Hit the Diamond" and in other episodes (referenced in "Too Short to Ride", "Beta", "Earthlings", and "Back to the Moon"). As the show's episodes continue, she becomes more comfortable with herself and her connections to other beings (and people) (as shown in "Kindergarten Kid", "Gem Harvest", "Adventures in Light Distortion", "The New Crystal Gems", and "Room for Ruby"), although she is not as adept at social situations. For instance, it is revealed she lied to Lapis so she'd feel better (in "Raising the Barn") and she begins to suffer depression (beginning in "Back to the Kindergarten") after Lapis leaves Earth. She makes such an impression on Lapis, that this water gem references her as part of her song in "Can't Go Back". Apart from handing out flowers at Ruby and Sapphire's wedding in "Made of Honor", the first gay wedding in a commercial cartoon, embrace each other in "Reunited". Both her and Lapis help the fellow Gems fight the Diamonds in "Change Your Mind". And of course, she appears in the recent Steven Universe movie, having a vital role there, determining the injector fluid with her robonoids and technology.

There is one major difference between Peri and Entrapta. Unlike Peri, Entrapta has not opened up to others in the same way. But this is not surprising, due to the fact she was in environments where people either felt displeased about her (among the princesses) or exploited her skills (among the Horde). When she appears in the season finale, "Destiny Part 2," there's nothing she nor Adora can do to stop Light Hope's plan, at least at first. Hordak learns about Catra's lies about Entrapta and attempts to kill Catra with his laser canon arm. In this episode, Entrapta only gets a few lines, but they are important ones, for the story. For instance, when talking to Bow, who asks what is happening, she says, "it's a portal. A big portal. With the planet balanced, the portal capabilities must be back online. We're getting pulled through." A screenshot from that scene shown below, indicating she is a bit excited about what will happen next:

She tries to be optimistic, noting they aren't in Despondos but are in the "wider universe" now. Adora stops Light Hope's genocidal plans but cannot stop the arrival of Horde Prime with a huge fleet of warships. She-Ra is destroyed, Adora thinks, because the sword is gone. These events set the stage for the next undoubtedly eventful season...

That leads me to the second section of this post.

Building upon Entrapta's "dataism" within my friend's fan fictions

A screenshot from her debut episode

Entrapta is mentioned in one of my friend's first stories, where Queen Angella laments to Samurai Jack about Entrapta working for the Horde:

> *Entrapta would be the perfect person to help you with constructing such a device, but...she is now working with the Horde, bringing her technology genius and inventor abilities to the side of evil...Our spies inside the Horde have indicated that the Supreme Leader of the Horde, Lord Hordak, is building a portal, likely with the help of Entrapta.*

This friend built out her character more when Adora, Glimmer, Bow, and Jack go to the Crystal Castle, with Light Hope able to see Entrapta's thoughts, as she worked with Entrapta to improve a portal which surprised Adora, asking herself why she was "working to turn the lightness of the world into darkness" and wondering if she had a "conscience of her own" or not. It also is part of the reason she breaks down later in the same story. In a story later on, characters suspect she helped hack into Light Hope, and she ends up being one of those who wants to shroud the planet in darkness, working with Hordak. This friend described her "almost slavish dedication to "science" no matter how much it hurt the planet," and noted the "evil look in her magneta-colored eyes as her prehensile lilac hair quickly tapped on the keyboard," as she said:

> *"Progress is going great! Our hack of Light Hope was a success...and the crumpling of that crystalline structure means it will be so much easier to get First One's tech for our*

machines. The Rebellion will think it's gone and done for, allowing us to go in without a trace. Now, if we could hack into all the runestones, perhaps we could even track the princesses...this...I must say...is all so exciting!"

Catra and Entrapta interact, I believe in episode, 'The Frozen Forest.' This is likely what she would have looked like as she typed onto that keyboard in my friend's fan fic

In the same story, Hordak praised her for the progress she had made. At one point, with only one Horde robot created by her remaining near the Crystal Castle, Bow directly addresses her:

Entrapta, someday you'll regret all this and realize the destruction you have caused to this planet...what you are doing is wrong...it's not for science, as you may think, it's for evil. I hope you change your mind.

Despite this, his words don't move her, and she rigged the remaining robot to explode, which happened in "Frozen Forest." Later, Entrapta greets Samurai Jack "with a friendly, and warm, smile," and is very fascinated by his desire to travel back in time and across dimensions. Sadly, Jack isn't moved by the pleas of his friends, and he accurately saw:

a 30-year-old woman who was kind, but lonely, having a positive outlook on life, and dedicated to pursuing knowledge and discovery through her experiments and research. It filled him with joy to meet someone thrilled with learning new information, although she

seemed a bit obsessive in this process. Even so, he could see that such dedication would lead to a disregard of morality, meaning she would not recognize that her work could hurt others. In a thundering voice, he told the rest of them his intentions and why he had come there.

He then defends Entrapta, although she warned him not to use the portal due to the possibility of error. Even so, she feels obligated to help him despite "her reservations about the safety of the portal itself" and he travels across dimensions, although not to the world he wanted. Ultimately, there is nothing she can do other than "shutting down the whole portal."

Entrapta has a breakthrough with Hordak in the "Signals" episode.

Apart from that, my friend talked more about her as a person in other stories, fleshing her out as a character:

The fact that Entrapta didn't pick up their magical signatures, on her computer, had been a miracle. It was a happy coincidence she had been in a deep sleep. She needed rest, especially since she had an older age than many of the princesses, who were in their

teens, having lived and breathed for 30 years on the planet...Preparing to attack them with her prehensile hair, Adora stunned her with a regulation stun gun which she had taken from a Horde soldier...Although she was in a daze, she could hear Pearl and Adora utter a few stern words, "Entrapta...it's time to talk," while the others surrounded her in a semi-circle. The time for reckoning was at hand

She then serves as a major part of my friend's story that served as the capstone of part 1 of my friend's "An Unlikely Alliance Against Evildoers" series. She asked why they had stunned her, and the heroes, including Glimmer, reminded her of the "scientific experiments she had conducted which "caused the destabilization of Etheria, almost killing them in the process." After Hordak's death devastated her, she opened the portal, wanting to join the ultimate Horde leader, but she relented. In the same story, she had a self-revelation to everyone:

My god, you must think I am a monster. I can understand why you are angry at me. I only wanted to conduct scientific experiments, collect data, and test the boundaries of thought. I never wanted to hurt anyone. But, in the process, I blindly charged ahead, not thinking of how my actions would affect other people. I am sorry and I ask for your forgiveness

With this, some, like Perfuma, wanted to forgive her, while others wanted her to "pay penance for what she had done." She did this by helping them begin dehordeification, starting with the Fright Zone's destruction (which happened thanks to her "ingenious implosion") after her materials had been moved back to her castle in Dyrl. Later, she talks with Peridot and works to "ensure that the new archives would have the appropriate technology," even though she would also have a trial. She also had a minor mention in my friend's recent story with Glimmer noting she is "awaiting trial," although my friend didn't give any more details at this point.

Undoubtedly, she will come up in some of my friend's future stories.

That's all I have for today. Until next week! Comments are welcome.

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Postscript

After posting this article on the She-Ra subreddit, I got some great comments on there I'd like to share here:

Super interesting to skim through. I think we tend to downplay the seemingly unattractive aspects of autism. Particularly the very data-driven robot meets interpersonal simpleton characterization. As an autistic woman in her 30s with a historical attraction to much older, evil men (ahem), myself, its defense often comes off as an attempt to soften those characteristics in order to make them more palatable to NTs. When in reality, many of the characterizations were misinterpretations of the autistic experience in the first place. Thank you for the analysis!- esjunsia

This was a really interesting read! Thank you for sharing! Entrapta is one of my favourite characters too and I agree with everything you said. The criticism you countered, that ‘it is hurtful that the one neurodiverse (ND) team mate turned evil because she is supposedly “too much of a reckless fool to realize that evil is bad”‘ - while I can kind of see where they’re coming from, I agree with you that it’s not entirely fair, not just for the reasons you mentioned but also because what evidence do they have that Entrapta even is “the *one* neurodiverse team mate”? I don’t see any reason to assume that. I’m neurodivergent too, but I actually recognise more of my own autistic traits in Adora. This post I found on tumblr explores that extremely well and I would definitely recommend reading it if you’re interested! - zutarakorrasami

I really hate everyone saying ‘oh she wanted Knowledge’ like her entire motivation for joining the Horde wasn’t believing her friends abandoned her - nor-fuck-pines

"He defined this term as data replacing our thinking to validate or invalidate a hypothesis, with data and algorithms seen as “a superior means to process data” and find meaning in it, as compared to human thoughts." I'm on that field. No, noboby [sic] with a basic understading [sic] of statistics and/or pratical experience with data based analysis believes that. Some evangelists and vendors say that, but it's because we need clients/funding. Human analysis still is the best by a huge margin - FellowOfHorses

I don't know why autistic Perfuma hasn't caught on. - Tropical-Rainforest

That's all for now.

Chapter Two: "We wrote her that way": Entrapta and autistic representation in She-Ra

Entrapta forgives Catra for exiling her to Beast Island at the end of Season 3, and being a jerk to her in the past, in the episode, "Taking Control"

In November of last year, I wrote about Entrapta, one of my favorite characters in the animated series, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power,* because she is morally gray character, a hacker, and a "smart and quirky chaotic neutral icon." In that post, I examined her character in the first four seasons of the show, noting that she is an autistic character who makes her own decisions, acting as "a princess with prehensile hair who is [also] a scientist and inventor always trying to tinker with ancient technology. " I also criticized some who claimed she is a "hurtful" representation of autistic people, noting that she is sweet and underappreciated, pointing out that Bow is the only one who sees her sympathetically, and that she stays in the Fright Zone by choice. I further noted that she is dedicated to science and research, sticks up for Catra when Hordak wants to send her to Beast Island, and stated that when she is rescued from Beast Island in Season 4, she "goes with them back to Bright Moon because of data and scientific discovery, not because of friendship or anything else." I additionally made a comparison between her and Peridot in *Steven Universe*, with storyboarder Maya Peterson (the same one who said Peri is

asexual and aromatic), said she doesn't interpret Peridot as autistic. I intend this post will be an update from my previous post, talking about her in the show's final (and fifth) season, which started streaming on May 15th. If you haven't seen the new season, please do so because this post is filled with spoilers! It is important to write about this because series creator ND Stevenson confirmed that Entrapta was autistic, basing Entrapta on an autistic person on the SPOP crew, a full-time storyboard artist named Sam Szymanski.[2]

Most of the commentary about the new season has focused on the mutual confession of romantic feelings by Catra and Adora, shipped as Catradora, who kiss in the show's final episode, with their love literally saving the world (and universe) from destruction. This is the right focus, while some have noted the other LGBTQ characters confirmed like Seahawk (whose ex is named Falcon), Kyle and Rogelio, the relationship between Perfuma and Scorpia, or the romance between Bow and Glimmer, among many other topics.[3] After all, as Lindsey Mantoan, wrote in a *CNN* opinion, She-Ra is the "best queer representation on television." In the process, however, little has been said about Entrapta. In fact, of many reviews I looked at, only a few even mentioned her in their analyses, despite her pivotal role in at least part of the season.[4] While one reviewer for *A.V. Club* (Shannon Miller) claimed that the show trades an in-depth look at Entrapta's treatment for "heroics," and saying there could have been "more reflection from those who have outwardly had more difficulty understanding Entrapta's mindset, " another, for *Forbes*, Linda Maleh, says the opposite. Maleh argues that Entrapta gets a lot "a lot of screen time as she learns to balance her love of machines with her desire to connect with people,"

[2] In his first tweet, he responded to a fan who asked if Entrapta is autistic, saying that "many of us relate to her and love her so much and it would mean a lot if we could get confirmation of her being autistic." He responded by saying: "yes, we wrote her that way. One of our crewmembers was on the spectrum and related to her specifically, and had a huge part in shaping her story and character!" She further explained that "the crew member was board artist @Sizzlemanski. His first episode was Entrapta's introductory episode in season 1 [System Failure] and he had a HUGE hand not only in defining her physical acting, but also pitched me several ideas for her arc early on! He basically became our go-to for Entrapta." **NOTE:** At the time this was written, Stevenson used different pronouns, and that has been changed in this post.

[3] As Stevenson stated on Twitter, he hopes that in the future we stop thinking about LGBT representation as a "race or a contest" and as more of a "community effort to uplift voices that have not yet had their stories told," with each individual piece of media as a "broadening of horizons."

[4] When ND Stevenson was interviewed by comicbook.com, Nerdist, Gizmodo, A.V. Club, L.A. Times, Polygon, Digital Spy, GLAAD, EW, and CBR, the interviewers understandably focused on the Catra/Adora slow-burn relationship, but never asked a question about Entrapta. One interviewer for Collider asked "...So we've got Bow and Glimmer, we've got Sea Hawk and Mermista, we've even got kind of an interesting relationship with Entrapta and Hordak, and then obviously CatrAdora. But did you know from the beginning how everybody was going to pair off or is that something that kind of developed over time?" but he never specifically replied about the "relationship with Entrapta and Hordak." Reviews of the show in *The Mary Sue*, *PinkNews*, *LA Times*, *tor.com*, and *ScreenRant* do not even mention Entrapta at all!

calling her entirely "adorkable," and that her character gives viewers some of the most touching and funny moments of the show. I tend to agree with Maleh more than Miller. Similarly, I think that Heather Hogan of *Autostraddle* makes a valid point in saying that Wrong Hordak brought out the charming parts of Entrapta, stating that it was nice to see her understanding how to work alongside friends, express herself better, and her feelings, while the princesses "start to understand her for who she really is." Although it is positive these reviewers noted her role in the season, there is clearly a lot more going on about Entrapta than what Miller, Maleh, or Hogan talk about.

Entrapta, who is between the ages 28 and 30, appears in every single episode of the fifth season, apart from episode 10, can be said to be the "smartest" character in the series. In the previous season, she was rescued from Beast Island by Bow, Adora, and Swift Wind, reminded about her true friends while ancient technology continued to pull her in. In contrast, in this season, she struggles to find a place among the other princesses, as highlighted in the episode "Launch." Since Entrapta has been a morally grey character in the past, it makes sense that the princesses are a bit distrustful. Even Emily, with her name as an obscure reference to *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, turns away from Entrapta when it appears that she cares more about tech "than saving their friend." After that episode, the princesses begin to understand her better. She later helps out Adora and Bow save Glimmer from Horde Prime's flagship. Glimmer is transported through space by Catra, in her first likely selfless act. She then helps Adora, Bow, and Glimmer successfully rescue Catra from Prime's flagship, called the Velvet Glove. She even does surgery on Catra, removing the chip in her neck. She, additionally, forgives Catra after she apologizes for treating her terribly. As a reminder, at the end of Season 3, Catra panicked when Entrapta tried to warn Hordak to not start the portal. She then orders her to be sent to Beast Island. She is shocked with what she is done (as is Scorpia by this cruel act against her), beginning her descent down a "dark, dangerous path." Basically, Catra blamed Entrapta for her own mistakes.

In the rest of the season, Entrapta continues to help the princesses and tries to disable all the chips before being transported to Prime's flagship. She apologizes to everyone when captured by Prime, literally the head of a cult of mindless drone soldiers. Whether Entrapta has platonic or romantic feelings for Hordak, the latter shipped as Entrapdak by one of the show's story editors

(and some other fans), it is up the viewer.[5] As some fans noted back in March, a few months before the recent season premiered, it is clear that there is "some chemistry between her and Hordak" and some even call their relationship "sweet," although I'm not sure I would go that far. In any case, it does mean that Hordak is more than a one-dimensional villain like in the original *She-Ra: Princess of Power* series in the 1980s which was used to sell action figures for Mattel. Through some searching, I did find an interview with Stevenson (complete with unfortunate spelling errors by the person who wrote the transcript of her interview responses) where he specifically talks about how Entrapta grows in this season:

> *"I think with a character like Entrapata [sic], we sort of live in a little bit of her own version of the world that the other characters don't always understand...It's not only Entrapta learning how to empathize and connect with others, but also for others to learn how to empathize and connect with her. And so I think with both sides of that, we see [Entrapta] growing this season. What I think has always been [Entrapta's] strength is that, even if she might struggle with communicating her feelings or understanding other characters when they're communicating their feelings to her,* ***I think her strength as a character -- kind of her superpower -- is that she sees humanity in everything****. Not just in humanoid or organic creatures, but she sees humanity in robots. She sees humanity in the AI that drives ships. She sees humanity in one clone in a million identical clones and* ***knows their personality and knows who they are and knows how to connect with them****... I think we see her make a lot of progress on that front, but then we also see her. I think she does more than almost any other character in humanizing characters who have never been humanized before by anyone....It's so much of what is the heart of this show. It seems like that's what makes Etherea [sic] special in general is that everyone who comes to Etherea [sic] isn't getting broken by it a little bit. They end up making connections and falling in love in ways they never thought were possible. And I think Entrapta really embodies that."*

Furthermore, as a morally grey character, who played a "big hand in some of the Horde-led destruction on Etheria," she still cares about her friends. While some may question her renewal

[5] On Instagram, ND Stevenson said that Entrapta would follow Hordak to Beast Island as his community services for his crimes and as a result, the "two would develop a romantic relationship and reunite with the bot she left behind in Season 4, keeping her promise to return," so it sounds like it is leaning toward romance, as noted in a summary on her fandom page. Also see Emily Hu who noted they did board a scene with Entrapta and Hordak but it never ended up being included. There is clearly a connection between Entrapta and Hordak, but I'm still not sure if it is romantic or friendly. It could really go either way.

of the individuality or "humanity" of Hordak, becoming his first genuine friend, later leading him to turn against Horde Prime, she clearly had a "unique perspective on the world that not everyone understands." Earlier in the season, when she encounters Hordak before he is freed from Prime's control, in an attempt to access the computer control center of Horde Prime so she can disable the mind-control chips, helped by Swift Wind, she tells Hordak “remember, your imperfections are beautiful!” When the essence of Prime is destroyed by She-Ra, he is freed, and is soon reunited with Entrapta, who says that she is "so glad" to see him back.

By this point, it is clear that Entrapta is not the "worst kind of villain" as some described her and is more than a person who "only cares about the pursuit of knowledge," no matter the consequences, as Brett Elderkin described her, also calling her a "mad scientist," but rather just a morally grey character, or perhaps "chaotic neutral" to use a Dungeons and Dragons term. That brings me to a recent article by Megan Crouse in *Den of Geek* appropriately titled "She-Ra: In Defense of Entrapta." She states that while Entrapta occasionally embraces the trope of not caring about "people who might be hurt when dangerous experiments go wrong," she is much more than that, and dramatically changes in Season 5. Crouse added that Entrapta in Season 4 was not truly happy as a hermit on Beast Island, although she maintained her fascination with science, missing people, and afraid that "her friends will inevitably abandon her." She then talks about the episode "Launch" where Entrapta's conflict with the fellow princesses reaches a boiling point, putting others in danger, with her actions "extremely, comically risk," wanting to win at no matter the cost. After Mermista accuses Entrapta of not caring about any of them, and not being trustworthy as a result, she responds by saying she didn't realize they were angry at her. She then retreats to apologizing, one of her many defensive mechanisms, stating:

> *I’m not good at people, but I am good at tech. I thought maybe if I could use tech to help you, you’d like me. But I messed that up, too.*

As she barrels ahead, Mermista pulls her back by her hair (just as Horde Prime does later), and is finally convinced of her good nature when Entrapta declares “Glimmer needs us!,” indicating she is willing to put herself in harms away as much as anyone else. As Crouse further outlines, while Entrapta's action is like what she has done in the past, she begins to explain how and why she acts and feels the way she does, gaining more friends along the way. Even so, she still clearly has trouble reading people, which is not "magically cured throughout this season." While Crouse says that it would "have been nice to see Entrapta really feel the consequences of

her dangerous actions," I would counter and say she did grow a lot in this season. On the other hand, I agree with Crouse that it is "sweeter to see her pursue science *and* friendship" than just tinkering with technology on Beast Island. While I can see why she argues that Entrapta is annoying, she makes a good point that Entrapta is not letting her "loner tendencies turn into complete isolation, but nor does she have to completely change who she is." As a side note, Entrapta cuts her own bangs, as Stevenson said once, although this is terrifying considering her power tools! Yikes!

Now, let's get to the elephant in the room: Entrapta flirting with technology. The first time this happens is in the episode "Launch," declaring flirtatiously: "Hello. You are very technologically advanced" before almost being blown to smithereens by the Horde robot. Then, in the episode "Stranded" she says: "Darla and I are going to spend some quality time together," again in a flirtatious manner, leading to confused looks from Adora, Bow, and Glimmer. Now, robosexuality, a term seemingly coined and/or popularized by *Futurama*, means the "love and/or sexuality between a humanoid and a robot." From these two interactions you could say that she is robosexual. Let us consider what Stevenson said about Entrapta: that she is learning to connect and empathize with others, and sees humanity in everything, knowing their personality and how to connect with them. One fan put Entrapta very well, remarking that she is a functional adult who can make full decisions, arguing that she is "chaotic good with a bad moral compass who likes to fuck space nazis," saying she makes bad decisions. I can agree with that to an extent, except to say that it makes sense why she ended up working for the Horde, since the princesses had not really liked/understood her before that point. Another fan noted, correctly, that Entrapta (and Scorpia) but had to earn the trust of the princesses in their own ways.

That's all! Comments are welcome.

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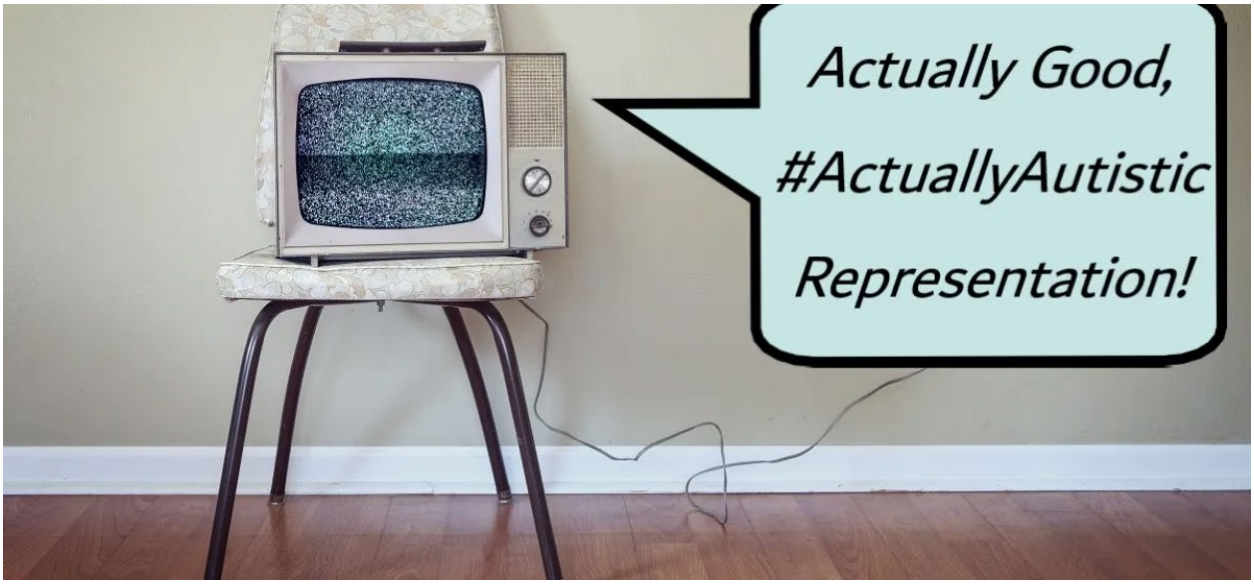
Chapter Three: Entrapta, She-Ra, and Autistic Representation



When people think of autism, Raymond Babbit in *Rain Man*, Christian Wolff in *The Accountant*, or Sheldon in *Big Bang Theory*, may come to mind. These negative stereotypes persist in popular culture despite increased positive representation for autistic characters. *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (SPOP) is different.

While the series rightfully received accolades for its LGBTQ+ representation, there is another aspect of the show: positive autistic representation. Entrapta (voiced by Christine Woods), a curious and sensitive hacker, scientist, and "geeky princess," is a well-written autistic character. SPOP series creator ND Stevenson stated that autistic storyboarder Sam Szymanski played a huge role in shaping Entrapta.

Behind the Mask

Whether she is seen as "morally grey," "adorkable," or "chaotic neutral," she is a smart character who makes her own decisions and tries to fix problems through a mechanical means.

Unlike the show's other protagonists, Adora, Glimmer, Catra, and Bow, around age 17 or 18, she is older, in her late 20s or early 30s. She struggles to connect with others, due to her occasional low self-worth, and sometimes hides behind her mask, affixed to her face. Her voice changes when wearing the mask, as she tries to cover up her autistic traits and appear neurotypical. As Noelle described Entrapta, she struggles to communicate her feelings or understand what other characters are saying, seeing "humanity in everything," whether clones, robots, or otherwise. In the show's most recent, and last season, she begins to balance her love for machines and a desire to connect with others, while helping the protagonists save the world of Etheria, where the series takes place, from the villainous Horde Prime. One of the characters she humanizes is Hordak, former leader of the evil Horde. Their interactions, in the show as a whole, led some fans (and members of the show's crew) to ship them as "Entrapdak." This was confirmed as canon in a Black Lives Matter charitable Twitch stream hosted by Noelle and her wife, Molly Ostertag.

Noelle also stated that Entrapta, as a loving person, has a lot of robot boyfriends and girlfriends. The latter is reflected in the show's most recent season when she flirted with technology, specifically the Horde Robot in the episode "Launch," and the spaceship, which she named "Darla," in the episode "Stranded." Whether these are examples of robosexuality, referring to love or sexuality between a robot and a humanoid person, or not, there is no question it is part of her propensity to see humanity in everything.

System Failure

Entrapta freely makes her own decisions as an "underappreciated technowizard," some of which are reprehensible. For instance, she helped the Horde destroy much of Etheria. Although she stayed loyal to her friend, Hordak, it is incorrect to call her the "worst kind of villain" or a person who cares only about pursuing knowledge despite the consequences. Whether she is fully aware of the planetary damage she has caused, she is undoubtedly morally ambiguous, with a "cheerfully wobbly" moral compass, different than the show's other characters.

She thinks that her calculations and data will give her the "answers," no matter the cost. As such, it is incorrect to say she lacks the ability to self-assess her actions or embodies stereotypes. After the Princesses unintentionally stranded her in the Fright Zone, she joined the show's

villains, the Horde, leading some to declare that she is a harmful form of representation, while others claimed she believed the lies of Catra, Adora's romantic interest. In any case, Entrapta willingly stays with the Horde and the Princesses respect this decision while disagreeing with it. There is a deeper reason she joined the Horde. When Glimmer and Adora meet her in her debut episode, "System Failure," fighting the murder robots she accidentally created, Glimmer sees her as a way to impress her mother and win the war against the series villains. In contrast, Glimmer's friend, Bow, sympathizes with Entrapta, calling her a "brilliant inventor," praise she happily accepts. Despite Glimmer's negative vibe, she stays friendly, and offers to cut off her leg to save them from the robots.

A few episodes later, in "Princess Prom," Entrapta geeks out, describing the prom as a "social experiment" which is the best place to observe social behavior. She pries into Glimmer's uneasiness and becomes friendly with Catra. Later, after Adora pulls her aside, it is implied that Entrapta's heart isn't with the Rebellion. The forcefulness of Glimmer, Adora, Mermista, and Perfuma toward her throughout season one, may be a subconscious turn-off for Entrapta, with the Princesses not completely understanding her. While the Princesses mourn the "death" of Entrapta, unknowingly leaving her behind, they had used her for their own purposes (defeating the Horde). Catra does the same thing, using her to get back at Adora.

Finding Friends in Exile

Furthermore, Entrapta may have been unaware she defected to the Horde or cares what side she is on. In the episode "Ties That Bind," she tentatively says she is with the Horde, telling Glimmer that she is on the side of science, but is living in the Fright Zone. Near the end of season three, considering what Adora told her, she tries to warn Hordak not to open a portal which threatens to destroy Etheria. Catra panics, electrocutes Entrapta, and tries to distance herself from her mistakes by sending Entrapta into exile onto the remote Beast Island. In the bizarre world created by the portal, Adora and her friends meet Entrapta who helps them figure out what is happening and thanks Adora for being a friend. In the following season, she is thankful that Bow, Adora, and their talking horse, save her from Beast Island, a place full of "technological monstrosities." Although she left Beast Island for scientific discovery and data, she appreciates Bow as a friend.

Due to Entrapta's track record with the Horde, the princesses are distrustful. This is shown in the season five episode, "Launch." As Megan Crouse describes it in her article, Entrapta begins to clash with the other princesses, putting them in danger. When Mermista accuses her of not caring about them and being untrustworthy, she responds by not realizing the Princesses were angry with her in the first place. She retreats to apologize, stating: "I'm not good at people, but I am good at tech. I thought maybe if I could use tech to help you, you'd like me. But I messed that up, too." After this, Entrapta tries to get away, but Mermista pulls her back with her prehensile hair, like Horde Prime in a later episode, relenting only when convinced that Entrapta cares about Glimmer.

In the rest of the season, she works to earn the trust of the other Princesses, gaining more friends as she recognizes the reasons behind her actions and explores her feelings for others. While you could say that Entrapta does not see the full consequences of her harmful actions, she overcomes possible social isolation and helps the series protagonists save their friends (first Glimmer, then Catra) from Horde Prime's flagship, the *Velvet Glove*. She also removes the mind-control chip from Catra's neck and forgives Catra after she apologizes for her hurtful actions. In the final episode of the season, after trying to disable mind-control chips of those across Etheria, when held against her will on the *Velvet Glove*, she apologizes to everyone. Later, after Catra and Adora save the world with their love, she reunites with Hordak.

Entrapta Represents

In the end, Entrapta is a positive form of representation for autistic people and subverts the Entrapta from the original She-Ra series, a simple villain without a conscience.

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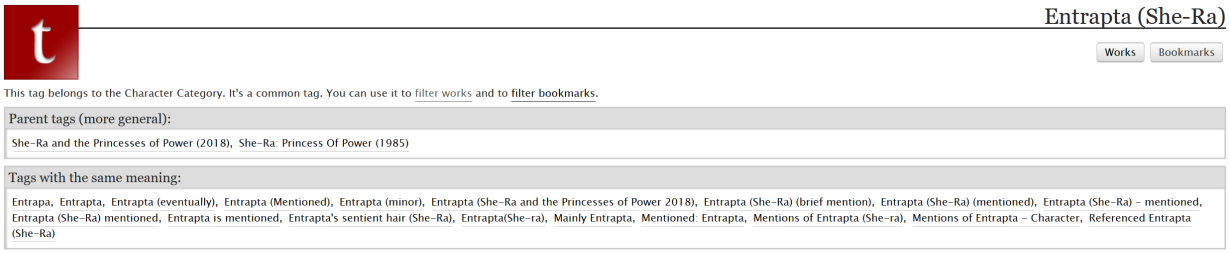
Concluding Words


Entrapta (She-Ra)
Works
Bookmarks
This tag belongs to the Character Category. It's a common tag. You can use it to filter works and to filter bookmarks.
Parent tags (more general):
She-Ra and the Princesses of Power (2018), She-Ra: Princess Of Power (1985)
Tags with the same meaning:
Entrapa, Entrapta, Entrapta (eventually), Entrapta (Mentioned), Entrapta (minor), Entrapta (She-Ra and the Princesses of Power 2018), Entrapta (She-Ra) (brief mention), Entrapta (She-Ra) (mentioned), Entrapta (She-Ra) - mentioned, Entrapta (She-Ra) mentioned, Entrapta is mentioned, Entrapta's sentient hair (She-Ra), Entrapta(She-ra), Mainly Entrapta, Mentioned: Entrapta, Mentions of Entrapta (She-ra), Mentions of Entrapta - Character, Referenced Entrapta (She-Ra)

From page for Entrapta on AO3. There are fanfics on fanfiction.net and Wattpad as well and posts on Tumblr.

After August 2020, I have occasionally mentioned Entrapta in my writing, either briefly in a review of *Inside Job*, or compared the characters of Rindou in *In the Heart of Kunoichi Tsubaki,* who is also socially awkward. In her case, she wears a mask to hide her possible autism to fit in at the "risk of burnout or extreme stress." For Entrapta, however, she is a sweet technowizard princess who wears a mask to hide herself from others and be in her own personal world. I've also briefly mentioned her in other topics, and even said that Norma, who struggles with social awkwardness in *Dead End: Paranormal Park*, is "more genuine" in her autism than Entrapta.

Since then, I haven't mentioned her in any posts. That doesn't mean I dislike her character, however. She was even mentioned in a listicle this month, noting that she uses her prehensile hair to her advantage, using it mostly as "a tool to work even faster on her inventions." It is also said that neuroatypical/autistic Entrapta is a common trope in fanworks.

When completing this e-book, I am intrigued to read more about Entrapta and interact with fans about her as well, something I haven't done in some time.

As always, comments are welcome.

- Burkely

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